1:Sanders Z-5,4 (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

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TABLE 2. CAUSES OF DEATH IN GREECE, 1950, BY NUMBER AND RATE

Cause of death	Number	Death rate (per 1000 people)
Heart disease	3270	.427
Cancer	2730	.358
Cerebral hemorrhage	2679	.352
Tuberculosis (respiratory)	2214	.293
Senility	1954	.258
Pneumonia	1523	.201
Nephritis	1284	.168
Violent accidents	1259	.165
Causes unknown	1166	.154
Congenital debility	998	.132
Diarrhea, enteritis	973	.128
Other tuberculosis	634	.083
Other diseases of digestive system	629	.082
Other infectious diseases	621	.081
Diseases of the liver	511	.067

Source: Mutual Security Agency Mission to Greece, *Medical and Sanitary Data on Greece* (Athens, 1952), p. 62 (mimeographed).

diseases which give the health authorities most cause for concern are tuberculosis, dysentery, typhoid and paratyphoid, venereal diseases, smallpox, various intestinal parasites, and particularly infectious hepatitis.

Of these causes of death, tuberculosis creates the greatest problem for those interested in preventive medicine, for it is commonly recognized that the reported death rate, 29.3 per 100,000 people, is probably less than half of the true figures. Greek peasants can therefore take small comfort in the fact that tuberculosis death rates in the urban areas are more than twice as high as those for rural districts, since this still means relatively high rates in the villages. Although the government is attacking tuberculosis with considerable vigor, the public response is only half-hearted. One of the first jobs of the UNRRA–World Health Organization mission after the war was to try to persuade the tuberculous to recognize their illness, to take treatment, and to realize that it was no disgrace to be ill. 164 753 [744 177]

However, in most families it is still considered a shame to have the disease, so much so that cases are hidden and doctors are even paid for not reporting cases to the public-health authorities. Although undernourishment is frequently associated with the high incidence of the disease, in Greece malaria has been a contributory cause by undermining resistance to the tuberculosis bacillus.

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have not reached. They also help in the gathering of olives, grapes, and many other products requiring patient labor.

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The woman is increasingly being viewed today as a supplementary source of labor in the fields, to be employed only when the need is urgent, although regional variations are still important. When she does go to the field, she may take the baby and the small children along and care for them as she works. Various explanations are offered for this lightening of field labor by women. Today, more of the village women have seen how the city women live and have resolved to put city ways into practice in their homes and villages. Furthermore, men seem to be showing more interest in their farms due to the help the government is giving in providing fruit trees, opening up of farm-to-market roads, and helping the peasant participate more actively in the national economy. Agricultural and home-economics extension workers, who now visit the majority of villages, not only tell the men that it is their job to do the field work, but they also show the men better methods for reducing the work load. Where tractors exist, the woman is relieved of much field work and can occupy herself with other tasks. She works more on her loom, takes care of her children, and cleans her house. She also has more time for gardening on a plot fairly close to the house. One recognizes the need for this in a place such as Ioannina (Epirus) where peasants in the outlying villages, with plenty of land near their house, buy at the city market vegetables which they could have grown at home if the women had had sufficient time.

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Keeping the Family Well

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Work, however, is not the only responsibility of a Greek housewife. Any ailing person becomes the immediate concern of the mother or the mother-in-law, with the older woman usually considered wiser in the mysteries of folk medicine. The patient also becomes the concern of the neighbors for, as one man put it, "when somebody gets sick, everybody goes to visit him and to look after him." For quite understandable reasons, the living standards of rural Greece are far below those found in Athens or in most countries of the West. Consequently, health practices, many of them surrounded with superstitions, are the outgrowth of the experience of people who for centuries have faced pain, illness, and death without the benefits of the accumulated medical discoveries of the modern world.

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Indeed, for much illness the peasant has a supernatural rather than a scientific explanation. As one writer has put it:

> The whole of popular medicine is based upon the knowledge of charms and incantations. Many simples and drugs are of course known and employed; but it is still generally believed, as it was in the old time, that "there would be no good in the herb without the incantation." For the most ordinary diseases are

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753 776 credited to supernatural causes, and there is no ill to which flesh is heir, — from a headache to the plague, — without some demon responsible for it. A nightmare and the sense of physical oppression which often accompanies it are not traced to so vulgar a cause as a heavy supper, but are dignified as the work of a malicious being named *Vrachnas*, who in the dead of night delights to seat himself on the chest of some sleeper, and by his weight produces an unpleasant feeling of congestion. . . .[13]

755 759 [793] For cures, then, one turns not only to the doctor but at times to the priest, who will come and read from "the holy books," or even more frequently to the village wise women, who understand what herbs to use and the particular charms appropriate to every occasion. These wise women usually keep their activities secret from the priest. Many remedies which seem fantastic, such as curing boils by putting pus from them on a piece of bread and giving it to a dog to eat, make sense to the peasant. One symbolically and supernaturally transfers the illness from the patient to some other host, susceptible or immune as the case may be.

755 [868] 755 757 [184] A mother will pass on her knowledge of folk medicine to her daughters, although they will often seek the help of some wise woman particularly skilled in caring for the sick. In order to learn more about the ordinary folk remedies, we compared a list drawn up by D. Loukopoulos for Aetolia, a district in Central Greece, with those cures believed in by Chrysoula, a wise woman on the island of Spetsai, just off the Peloponnesos.[14] As was expected, the prescriptions did not tally on all points, but their general purpose and approach were much the same.

To cure malaria:

Wash a cup out, give patient holy water on an empty stomach without letting the patient know what he is drinking. After he drinks this once or twice at dawn he'll feel much better. (Aetolia)

To cure stomach ache:

Boil powdered acorn caps in one hundred drams of water, add clove and four pieces or *rigane* (wild origan). When it has been boiled down to size of an ouzo (brandy) cup, strain it and add some rum. When the sick man drinks it, all pains will ease. (Aetolia)

Boil the stem of the poppy plant and give the brew to patient to drink. (Spetsai)

755 793 *To cure insanity:*

Insanity cannot be cured with medicines. The priest reads to the insane person out of the Four Gospels, then may take him to a monastery. If he does not get better, he is tied (often chained) to the ring in the tiling of the church floor. (Aetolia)

[789] The priest exorcises the demon by using the ritual of St. Basil the Great, or some sacred relic may be taken to the insane person in the hope of driving away the demon. The patient is not taken to the monastery. (Spetsai)

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To cure terrific abdominal pains, or "twisting the navel":

The constant pains and vomiting are said to be due to the untwisting of the navel. If the patient is to recover, his navel must be retwisted. Only a few people know how to do this. The one effecting the cure presses the navel with the index finger of his right hand, holds it firmly and starts walking around the patient. As he turns around he halts — at the head, at the feet, and at each side. He goes around like this seven or eight times and the patient recovers. (Aetolia and Arcadia) [753] [826]

Only special women can do this. The one who helps puts a rag around her finger, twists the navel several times until she feels it catch. Then she withdraws her finger and puts a compress on the navel: This compress is composed of blue paper into which some incense melted in *mastica* has been placed. (Spetsai)

Even though some of these practices are restricted to particular regions of Greece, and are carried out by only a few people in a given village, they do constitute a folk approach to healing. But there is one important belief, general throughout Greece, which is associated with illness: the Evil Eye. In one family, in a village near the town of Thebes, some of the members wore amulets which the priest had blessed and into which communion bread had been sewed. Elsewhere in Greece I saw amulets containing splinters of holy wood or earth from Jerusalem, worn around the neck. The women in explaining the Evil Eye said that one cannot always tell who casts the Evil Eye, but that there are some people in the village suspected of doing this and that they are to be avoided or else watched carefully. 751 754 [753]

If a child is believed to be under the spell (that is, shivers and does not feel well), the person suspected can be brought before the child and asked to spit three times to get rid of the curse, or the child can be taken to the priest who reads a blessing. Perhaps the cure thought most efficacious is a secret formula which an older woman passes on to a younger one with the instructions that it is never to be improperly revealed. Not all village women know the formula but only those who have been particularly selected by the wise women, or an older relative, for this purpose. In this village home, the women after much whispered discussion, decided details of the formula would do no harm since we were outsiders and would be leaving soon. Here are the basic elements: 755 [753] [793] [124]

Christ and the Virgin Mary
Passed through a crossroad;
They spread their golden apron
And ate. Crumbs fell on the apron.
They took those crumbs
And tossed them into the sea.
The sea waters were stirred up
And man was cured.

1:Sanders Z-5,† (1952-1959) 1962 EH1 Greece EH1

755 But again we asked, "How can you be sure that the Evil Eye is the cause of the trouble?" "One can be sure," we were told, "if you take a pan of cold water to a high place, break an egg into it, and notice whether the egg cakes or not. If it does, the child has the Evil Eye but will get well. Or one can drop the coals from the wood of a thorn tree into the pan and, if the coals turn over, one knows that the evil will turn over and the boy will get well. We then sprinkle the water from this pan onto the child." This is one time when the incantation is surely used.

Chrysoula, a wise woman of Spetsai, gave me further information about the Evil Eye that was similar in essentials but differed in details. She said [753] that when her young granddaughter comes back from a walk and is restless and nervous, it is clear that an Evil Eye has been cast, in which case one must test to be sure. To do this, Chrysoula takes the *kanteli* (little oil lamp) from the household shrine and gets a glass of water. She picks up the child, makes the sign of the cross over her three times and then crosses the water three times. After that she dips her fingers into the kanteli and lets one, two, or three drops of oil fall into the glass of water. If the oil spreads or mixes with the water, the child has the Evil Eye; if the drops remain as oil drops and do not mix, then the child is not suffering from the spell. Should it be the Evil Eye, one crosses the child with the water on the lips or forehead and whispers words from the gospel or gives special prayers. [124] But unlike our informants in the village near Thebes, Chrysoula refused to tell us the text of the special prayer because she said she would lose her power; she did say, however, that if she were away from her village she could repeat it. Yet she was ready to fill in many other details.

754 To find out who cast the Evil Eye in a particular case, according to 755 Chrysoula, one gives cloves to three suspected persons with the request that each in turn toss them into the fire. The one whose cloves pop is the one who cast the Evil Eye. There is another way: one can drop three pieces of charcoal into a glass of water, and if any piece floats then the person represented by that piece of charcoal, whether present or not, is said to have cast the Evil Eye. The same procedure was commonly used in Aetolia.

[826] There are also other ways of knowing. People whose eyebrows meet together or those with green eyes can cast an Evil Eye. Even a mother, if she does not take proper precautions, can cast the spell on her own child. Chry- [751] soula told about a relation of hers who looked at her sleeping baby and [827] said, "my, what a nice baby you are!" and failed to spit on it as a guard against the Evil Eye. Four hours later the child spit up some froth and died. A person who learns that he has cast the Evil Eye, and this is often done quite unintentionally, can undo the spell by spitting three times on the neck of the person suffering if he spits without the sick person's knowledge.

869 The children of the home, whether supposed victims or not, cannot help
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/68 cont./ 164 [752]
reward. Whenever there is a tooth-ache, whether the tooth is good or bad, the remedy is to pull it out. Often the patient is tied up against a tree and three or four people hold him while the practical dentist ties a string around the tooth and pulls it out. /69/ Often the string breaks before the tooth is out.

It has become a custom to wash the hands and mouth after a meal. It is the raw vegetables, the hard-baked bread and the ignorance of the tooth paste and toothbrush that keep their teeth healthy and strong. [264] [515]

Sanitary privies. The sanitary privy is one of the urgent necessities of the family, but one seldom comes across it in any village. Megali Vrisi, having had the privilege of having a doctor and a nurse, started building new sanitary privies. Many farmers still use the old method of fencing a corner and placing two large stones for the people to stand on. No ditch whatsoever is prepared for this. Fortunately, the climate is dry and everything evaporates and dries. One of the causes for extensive intestinal diseases among the young was due to these old-fashioned privies. People are learning, more and more, the source of house flies and the breeding sources of diseases among their children. Even the present privies are not so safe, but have reduced the troubles considerably. 514 514 744

People who still cannot believe that diseases are caused by micro-organisms, do not fully appreciate the means to combat them. [753]

/70/ Health in relation to housing. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, the houses were built by the farmers at a time of great necessity and there was no time to think about the sanitary side of the house. The farmers wanted a shelter for their families and thus built a square, one-room house with as few windows as possible, and with a small door to cut down the cost. Living conditions under such circumstances were naturally very unhealthy, since the whole family had to keep everything in the same room and have a family of five sleep in the same bed. 362 [513]

so that fragments will not lodge in his throat. The pediatricians urge against this practice. They also urge rigid scheduling of feedings. The behaviourist principles of child rearing fit into the value of firmness, the feeding schedule falls in with the training of fortitude, and is introduced in the name of self-discipline, as well as for giving the mother freedom, that is leisure and freedom from encroachment. Few mothers, however, fall in with these schedules. 853

Toilet training is not mentioned in the two current manuals on child care. Mothers report that they begin training for urination at five or six months. Training for the bowel movement does not come until the child can sit by himself. Help in learning how to speak is suggested and described at length, but none for walking. Greek mothers do encourage their children to walk, however, and a folk rhyme says that a baby, "lest it be shamed," takes to the wall and walks at seven months. The manuals devote much space to character training; obedience is taught first, almost from birth; it is the parents' task to mould the character of the child, to be firm and unyielding. Mothers are urged not to be indulgent or overprotective. 863 856 [868] 867 [855]

The manuals devote about a third of their space to illness and home care. Under illness are listed sleeplessness, enuresis, thumbsucking, night terror, lack of appetite. Enuresis is said to come from irritation of the urethra, thumbsucking to begin around the fifth month from irritation of the gums. 863 853

In recent years, mothers have been urged to spend more time with their babies and to do more things for them. Among the urban well-to-do this means that mothers are urged to bathe, feed, and suckle their babies themselves. For other groups, this would mean a displacement; the children are usually with the mother, working with her and sharing experience with her; but to give them her undivided attention she would have to change basic attitudes, the accepted place of the child within the family and his assumed share in all its functions; and she must reorient the entire system of roles within the family. 854 182 [369]

The mother apparently takes no delight in the naked baby, in touching its skin or watching its movements when freed from the swaddling cloth. Traditionally the baby, like the adult, is never naked. The baby's bath is not a special occasion of delight. In her lullabies, the mother shows no delight in any part of the child. She speaks of the joys of gardens, flowers, herbs and trees, but most of all, she tells of the rich clothes and adornments she is ordering from strange lands. She dreams of her daughter's wedding and her son's education. To the visitor, the baby consists of arms and legs; she says, first making appropriate allowances for the evil eye: "How his arms and legs have grown!" The mother coos and signs to her baby and smiles a special smile; she kisses his hands, she holds him in her arms. She calls him "My little gold, my little angel, my little bird, my little love"; she uses no terms derived from the sense of taste, unless she is a refugee 854 [291] [784]

he worships her like the Virgin. A derisive Dodecanese anti-Mussolini song, composed during Italian occupation, makes casual reference to God and the beloved Virgin of the Island.

HEALTH

The stock phrase for beginning a Greek letter is "We have health and health we wish for you." A frequent form of greeting and good-bye is "Health to you", and this is also said to anyone who sneezes. Anyone wearing a new article of clothing is greeted with the wish that he wear it with health. The question "How are you? Are you well?" asked upon a meeting with someone, are real questions, requiring an answer. Health is good and important, it is desired, but it is not a preoccupation. The wish for health is not a sanction; one of the child care manuals uses this sanction in urging mothers not to let their young children play with the neighbourhood children for fear of contracting infections, but the other urges the mothers not to worry about microbes, since association with others is of primary importance. In general, however, health is not a motivation in nutrition, recreation, or housing. And human relations are definitely more important. It is terrible to send a member of the family to the hospital unless, of course, it is necessary for an operation. Because of this attitude, tuberculosis often spreads through the family, since very often not even the barrier of self-protection will be introduced between the ailing and the well. Added to this is the fear that, if tuberculosis is known to be in the family, it will be hard to get a son-in-law. However, if an operation is required, a woman will go alone from a village to a hospital in Athens. There is no rejection by her family involved here; in addition, the pattern of fortitude is evoked.

In general, people do not go to a doctor unless something is very wrong. They do not go for a general check-up, although the habit of going to maternal and well-baby clinics is gaining ground. If anyone is unwell, home remedies are first resorted to, and probably the wise woman who knows about herbs is called in. The manuals on child care have long sections, covering about a third of the book, on home care and the diagnosis of disease; and they urge the use of traditional remedies: cupping, the use of camomile and other herbs. When a serious illness is recognized, the doctor is called and vows are made to the Virgin or the appropriate Saint; a mother may vow a foot pilgrimage, or 40 daily obeisances over a period of time, or the gilding of the hands of an ikon. Much illness arises from the evil eye or magic spells, and can be counteracted by magical practices.

The tuberculosis division of the UNRRA mission to Greece reports the impression that there was only one half the amount of tubercu-